

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Indochina

SUBJECT Viet Minh Document Concerning Land Policy in Vietnam

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☐ Comment. The following is a translation of a Viet Minh document published by the Propaganda and Cultural Office of Kien An concerning the land policy in the Viet Minh and in the French-controlled zone.

☐ Comment. Although there is no date on this document, it would appear that it was written after the First National Congress of the Lao Dong Party which was held in mid-November 1953.

I. Why we should mobilize the masses to carry out the land policy.

1. The French invaders and the American interventionists rely on the reactionary land owners to carry out the invasion of our country. The reactionary land owners in turn need the protection of the imperialists to oppress and exploit our people. The alliance of the imperialists with the reactionary land owners is now clear as daylight. For this reason, to destroy the imperialists invaders, it is necessary to overthrow the reactionary "hunting dogs" in the imperialists' service. These are members of the puppet government of Bao Dai, Nguyen Van Tam, and the other reactionary traitors.

The general motto of our war of liberation is "long-range resistance and self-sufficiency". For long-range resistance, it is necessary to nurse the people's strength. For self-support, it is necessary to rely on the people's strength. And because 90% of our population are farmers, to nurse the people's strength means to strengthen the farmers.

These two points are essential to bring our Resistance to victory and our revolution to success.

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2. The Party, the Government and the Front have set up the land policy in order to reach these objectives, but the implementation of the policy leaves much to be desired. In many places the farmers have benefited very little or not at all from it, especially the Catholic farmers. This situation is true although the land policy was made public a long time ago, but many farmers still do not know anything about it. Because the administrative and party officials care little for the life of the masses and belittle the land problem as well as the decisive part played by the farmers in our Resistance and revolution, they have not carried out the land policy efficiently nor have they fought the reactionary land owners. No efforts have been made to educate the farmers to rise up and fight for themselves. Control by high-level officials has been loose, while at lower levels the policy was misunderstood or discarded because of egoistic interests. In many places, the reactionary land owners and corrupt officials were in control of the administrative powers and political organizations of the village and were able to sabotage and distort the policy of the Central Government.¹

II How to mobilize the masses for the thorough implementation of the land policy?

1. President Ho has decreed the following decisions relative to this policy:
 - a. Rent reduction. The land owners, the organizations and the rich farmers who rent their land must lower their rates.
 - All rents must be reduced by 25 percent as compared with rates in force prior to the August Revolution (not including the rent increases collected by the owners to cover the rice contributions to the Japanese). If the pre-revolution rates are too high, rents must be reduced further so that they shall not exceed one third the total yield of the land. In case of low-quality land, where very hard work is needed, rents must be reduced by 50 percent or more. If damages are suffered from natural disasters, rents must be even lower or entirely suppressed. Evaluation of these rates must be made by the agricultural organizations or the Farmers' Association.
 - It is strictly forbidden to collect additional rents or collect rents before the harvest. No excuse can be accepted for rent increases.
 - As of July 19, 1949, date of the publication of the Rent Reduction decree No. 78-SL, any land owners who have not reduced the rents to the right level must refund the total of all amounts collected in excess of the right rate, retroactive to that date.
 - For those who own only a small piece of land but who are unable to till their land themselves and must rent it, and whose standard of living is equal or inferior to that of the middle class farmers, amicable arrangements must be worked out through the agricultural organizations in order to maintain the same rate, or to reduce the rents only by a small percentage. The rent reduction regulations do not apply to these cases.
 - b. Renting contracts
 - Contracts for renting should have a minimum duration of five years. (Except for the cases of small land owners who cannot exploit their land themselves).
 - Fencing expenses must not be paid by the farmers.
 - If the owners sell the land, the farmers have the right to purchase it and to pay the price by installments. If the farmers do not purchase the land, the owners must pay them the expenses of redeeming the land or of building irrigation canals or dikes. In any case, the farmers can continue to work on the rented land until the end of the renting contract.
 - The land owners must not, because of the rent reduction, take back the lands, farm animals and houses already rented to the farmers.
 - c. Regulations on loans
 - The farmers do not have to repay the loans received prior to the August Revolution, because by the time of the new decree on April 12, 1953, they must have paid it back at least twice in cut-throat

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- interest rates. The same applies to loans received from persons convicted of treason, or loans received by members of regular, local or guerrilla forces, by government of Party members, by civilian laborers, in cases when the debtors died while on duty.
- Payments of capital and interest is suspended for debts contracted by farmers toward persons who are now living in the occupied areas, by members of the armed services, by agents of the government or the party prior to the date of the new decree April 14, 1953. Payment is postponed during the duration of armed or civil service. Payment is also postponed for debtors who suffered damages from the enemy or from natural disasters when they are postponed from one to three years. No interests is accrued during the period of postponement.
 - Interest must be reduced to 18 percent for money loans and 20 percent for rice loans, for loans received prior to the date of the new decree which are not for loans received prior to the date of the new decree which are not included in the two above items. For debts incurred by farmers to rich land owners, interest must be reduced for all periods ending on May 22, 1950, date of the decree 89-SL on reduction of interests.
 - For debts on which payment is suppressed, reduced or postponed, the lenders must return to the debtors all objects or properties retained as collateral.
 - For loans effected between the poor and middle class farmers themselves and loans received for commercial and industrial purposes, they are not subjected to the above regulations.
 - From now on, loan operations must be carried out on a mutual agreement basis. The Government does not set up any official rate for interests but it is strictly forbidden to oppress the debtors with excessively high rates of interest.²
- d. Confiscation of land belonging to French colonialists, Vietnamese traitors and reactionaries for distribution to landless farmers.
 - Land, animals and other property belonging to French colonialists, Vietnamese traitors and reactionaries will definitely be distributed to farmers who have little or no land. Exceptions to this are industrial plants, historical monuments, political, economic and cultural works and documents.
 - Confiscated land will be distributed according to the number of persons in the family, notwithstanding their ages. Priority is given to families of dead or wounded soldiers and members of the armed forces who will be given good land before other applicants.
 - The area of land given to each person should not exceed the average area of land possessed by any person in the village.
 - e. Distribution of land presented by rich owners to the village.
 - Land offered by rich owners to the village will be distributed in the same way as land confiscated from French colonialists and Vietnamese traitors and reactionaries.
 - f. Distribution of public land.
 - All arable public land must also be definitely distributed to farmers who possess little or no land. Distribution of public land will be made under the supervision of the village agricultural organization, after a farmers' meeting.
 - Land formerly part of the public land or contributed by private individuals to certain particular uses will now be returned to public land or, according to the desire of the contributors, be merged with the mass of public land submitted for distribution to poor farmers.
 - Public land formerly misappropriated by powerful land owners, corrupt officials, etc., must now be taken back for distribution.
 - g. Utilization of land belonging to absent owners.
 - Land belonging to owners living in the occupied area will be temporarily given to the village farmers for free exploitation. No rent is due for

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this exploitation, except when the land belongs to farmers of the poor or middle class. Distribution of such land will be accomplished as with land belonging to French colonialists, Vietnamese traitors and reactionaries. If the owners return to the village, and if they have not committed acts of treason, the land will be returned to them.

--Land belonging to owners absent for reason of government or party service, or of war circumstances, without a family to take care of it, will be rented at low rates to poor farmers.

- h. Utilization of private land left uncultivated.
- Unexploited land, or land left uncultivated for two years without any reason and which belongs to private individuals or to religious organizations, will be distributed to poor farmers.
 - Land left uncultivated by private individuals will belong to the poor farmers who have worked on it since the August Revolution.

NOTE: THE LAND POLICY DOES NOT APPLY TO SALT MARSHES.

2. The main method used to carry out the land policy is the mobilization of the masses.

- a. What is mass mobilization?
- To mobilize the masses is to educate the masses by propaganda so as to make the masses conscious of their strength and to encourage them to rise up and fight for their rights. The part of our agents will be to issue instructions, to act on the behalf of or to do favors for the masses.
 - Mass mobilization of the farmers is aimed at leading the mass of farmers in their fight against reactionary land owners and corrupt officials, in order to force them to carry out the land policy of the Party, the Government and the Front.
- b. What is total mobilization of the masses?
- Total mobilization of the masses means to put faith in the masses, to let the masses rise up for the fight, to free the masses of all ties, while directing the mass movement with strong and proper leadership.
- c. How to fight.
- To fight the land owners does not mean to fight them physically. There are three forms of fighting:
 - Logical combat: use of material evidence to defeat the torturous arguments of the reactionary land owners and corrupt officials.
 - Combat of strength: to use the strength of the masses' unity in order to convert the reactionary land owners and corrupt officials.
 - Juridicial combat: to use the law of the Popular Court to punish them.
- d. What are the objectives of the mobilization of the masses?
- The mass mobilization is not only aimed at giving land and rice to the farmers, but also has the following realistic objectives:
- To weaken as much as possible the political and economic influence of the reactionaries.
 - To take the first step toward bringing political power to the working farmers and to meet a few of their economic needs.
 - To raise the political standard a step and to wake the class consciousness of the farmers.
 - To take the first step toward improving the village organizations and the Farmers' Association, consolidating the local administrative authority, consolidating and enlarging the Popular Front in the villages, boosting production and giving impetus to the Resistance.

- III What are the advantages of the mass mobilization in carrying out the land policy?
- Having benefitted from the land policy, the farmers will enthusiastically join the armed forces to fight the enemy, participate in civilian labor groups to help our soldiers, work to increase production in our rear area, willingly pay agricultural taxes, and thus strengthen our national finances.

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- The living standard of the farmers will be improved because the purchasing power of a large number of consumers, the farmers, will increase. Trade and industry will have favorable conditions for development. Those who have some capital, small merchants and small owners, will be greatly encouraged in developing their investments. The workers will be employed in great numbers.
- With the fulfillment of the most urgent needs, the people's cultural activities will develop. Intellectuals and artists will be encouraged to serve the people and the country with better work.
- The progressive and patriotic notables will have many opportunities to show clearly their attitude toward the Country and the People.
- Once the political situation of the working farmers is solid, the village authorities themselves will be consolidated, the people's united fronts in the village will be enlarged and reinforced, the number of agricultural organization members will be greatly increased. The traitors, reactionaries, will be denounced and punished, as will the former corrupt officials. They will no longer be able to take advantage of the administrative and organizational machinery of the villages. The popular democratic regime will be built and really consolidated, from its base upward.
- The mobilization of the masses for the implementation of the land policy will also furnish favorable propaganda directed to the enemy troops, because the majority of the rebels are farmers.
- In short, the mobilization of the masses for the implementation of the land policy will have good results, in the military as well as the political, economic and cultural fields. All classes of the population will benefit from it.

IV Must we mobilize the masses for the implementation of the land policy in the guerrilla and occupied zones?

1. It is strictly forbidden to mobilize the masses for the implementation of the land policy in the guerrilla and occupied zones because many conditions are lacking:
 - The mass mobilization will be exposed to enemy destruction and terrorism.
 - Shortage of agents for leadership.
 - The land policy objectives will be distorted by imperialists and reactionaries. They will exploit it and create dissension among our population. However, efforts should still be made to obtain certain reductions of rent and interest rates and to protect as much as possible the rights of the farmers, even in these areas.
2. In the guerrilla operating area, the land policy may be implemented to the following extent:
 - In areas where our bases are fairly strong, with good leadership and strong popular support, it is possible to lead the masses to demand reduction of rent and of interest rate. It is preferable to convene a conference of farmers to discuss the acceptable rent levels and then send delegates to discuss with the owners in order to reach amicable settlements of the matter, WITHOUT ORGANIZED STRUGGLE AGAINST THE OWNERS.
 - Reactionary land owners must be dealt with in combination with the program of liquidation of traitors. Their land will be distributed in the same way as land belonging to the French colonialists and Vietnamese traitors.
 - With regard to land belonging to the French colonialists and Vietnamese traitors, the principle in force is as follows: those who have been working on these properties will go on working on these as before, providing they pay their agricultural taxes regularly. It is possible to encourage those who exploit large areas of land to split it with those who have little or no land.
 - Public land will be distributed, in strong based areas, in the same way as in the free zone.

Note: The implementation of the land policy in the guerrilla area must be aimed at consolidating the unity of the population in the struggle against the enemy to protect the people's villages and families, improving as much as possible the morale and class consciousness of the working farmers.

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3. In the occupied area:

- If our bases are strong, it is possible to encourage the farmers to use legal means to negotiate with the land owners in order to protect to a certain extent the right of farmers and to obtain reduction of rent and interest rates.
- The main duties of the population in the occupied area are to spread as widely and as deeply as possible the meaning and success of the mobilization of the masses as decreed by President Ho, the Party, the Government and the Front, in order to break the misleading and deceitful propaganda of the imperialists and reactionaries, to show that their so-called "land reform program" is just a new way to strip our people of our national resources.

V. Counter all misleading and deceitful propaganda of the enemy.

The imperialists and the reactionary traitors are frightened by the great success of our mobilization of the masses. They have distorted the truth about our program in order to win the land owners and rich farmers to their side and to throw suspicions into the minds of our farmers and of the other classes of the population. On the other hand, they have made great publicity about their fake "land reform program." It is necessary to refute their misleading and deceitful propaganda:

The French say: "Now they (the Viet Minh) are fighting the land owners. In the future, they will fight the rich and middle class farmers, the bourgeoisie and small bourgeoisie." That is completely false. We are only fighting the reactionary traitors and corrupt officials in our villages. We are not fighting the rich farmers. On the contrary, we advocate close alliance with the rich farmers to fight the land owners. The rich farmers must realize that the farmers' fight against the land owners is justified and that they must support the farmers. If the rich farmers have benefitted a little from excessive rent and interest rates, they must reduce their rate according to the policy.

In general, all the farmers of the middle-class are standing in the ranks of the working farmers to fight the reactionary landlords and corrupt officials. There is no reason for the working farmers to fight against the middle class farmers, because then they will be fighting against themselves.

The bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie live mostly on trade and the land is not their main resource. The mobilization of the mass is aimed at implementing the land policy and therefore is not directed against those who do not live on the land. If any elements of the bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie possess some land for rent, the farmers are only to ask them to reduce their rent in accordance with the policy of the Government, but are not to touch in any way their business activities. The bourgeoisie and the small bourgeoisie are not the objectives of our struggle. On the contrary, they are revolutionary classes which must cooperate with the workers in order to overthrow imperialism and feudalism and to build a popular democratic regime.

WHAT IS "TO KHO"?

To Kho means to relate publicly all the mistreatments and sufferings a person or his family has endured through the oppression of the landlords, from several generations prior to this day; to relate all schemes plotted by the landlords to help the enemy loot our people. This will serve to educate the farmers and the other classes of the population, to show them the true face of the land owners, to stir up hatred of the farmers against this class, to boost their morale for their struggle.

The French pirates and their puppets, the reactionary landlords, are frightened by the "To Kho" movement. If their cruel deeds are brought to light, everybody will hate them and they will not be able to go on deceiving, oppressing and looting the people. For this reason, the "To Kho" movement has been called by them a "savage procedure". Everybody must be aware of their perfidy.

Do the Bao Dai and the Nguyen Van Tam puppets really want to protect the rights of the farmers with the "land reform" program?

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First of all, we must know the type of persons Bao Dai and Nguyen Van Tam are. They are the puppet representatives of the great land owners and capitalistic merchants. Therefore, they will never respect the interests of the farmers.

They have set up their "land reform" program because they want to deceive the farmers, to win influence for their own interests, and to distract the people's attention from our land policy. For clear understanding, let us see some of their deeds:

They encourage the creation of Farmers' Associations, but rally only land owners and corrupt officials.

On paper, they announced rent reductions for the farmers, but used violence against farmers struggling for rent reduction.

They said they took care of the farmers, but in fact they chased farmers away from their homes and land in order to get sites for their posts.

They have burned thousands of tons of rice and have trampled down thousands of acres of farmers' rice fields.

In short, the Bao Dai and Nguyen Van Tam puppets are great land owners, traitors and reactionaries; they are enemies of the farmers. The farmers will never believe their deceitful lies, but will fight them harder and harder every day until the annihilation of the gangs of imperialists and feudal reactionaries is complete.

Published by the Propaganda and Cultural Office of Kien An.

1. Comment. While the top-ranking Viet Minh leaders are well-indoctrinated and disciplined and the masses docile, the rank-and-file of the cadre, composed largely of petite bourgeoisie, have always been more or less hostile to such Viet Minh policies as agrarian reform. When it is considered that the level of the rice supply is probably the most important factor limiting Viet Minh military operations, and the fact that rice production has fallen off because of heavy mobilization of civilian labor, agrarian reform assumes a position of paramount importance in current Viet Minh policy. In order to successfully carry out land reform, an extensive purge of the cadre in the near future is not unlikely.
2. Comment. This method of establishing interest rates evidently refers to commercial and industrial loans only.
3. Comment. The To Kho is generally referred to as the "denunciation system".

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